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ABSTRACT

Before examining potentially negative effects of rock music on adolescents, it is necessary to demonstrate links between adolescent motivations for consuming rock music and active involvement relative to that use and also to consider how much rock listeners rely on rock music as a source for information about values, beliefs, and social interaction. A study hypothesized that rock music users with personal or social utility gratifications will demonstrate acute and more enduring types of active involvement. Subjects, 175 public school students from three senior high schools in the Cleveland (Ohio) metropolitan area, were surveyed with self-report questionnaires. Results indicated that rock music listening is varied, sometimes quite active. Findings also showed a strong relationship between gratifications sought, whether content utility or process specific, and two types of rock music activity, Involvement and Comparing. (Four tables of data are included, and 20 references are appended.) (MS)

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# Expectations of Rock Music Consumption for Entertainment and Information Relative to the Active Involvement of the User

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Increasing research attention on rock music use has coincided with public criticism about the alleged deleterious effects of lyrical and video imagery (Lull, 1987). While adolescents mainly use rock for entertainment, researchers claim the audiences actively seek other gratifications, sometimes related to anticipatory socialization processes (Roe, 1987). A continuing social concern with controlling the distribution of music generates the need to study some potentially negative effects of rock music, particularly on adolescents. However, such studies are premature without first demonstrating links between adolescent motivations for consuming rock music and active involvement relative to that use. It is also important to examine how much rock listeners, particularly adolescents, rely on rock music as a source for information about values, beliefs and social interaction.

Rock music consumption among adolescents may involve both content and context socialization aspects. The contents studied have been largely negative, e.g. violent, sexual, and sexist themes (Sherman and Dominick, 1986). However, Lull (1985) argues for gaining a better understanding of the listening context. He notes the uniqueness of music consumption--its dominance in youth culture, its physical nature, its enhancement of social and sexual experiences, yet its contribution to personal escape, as with drugs (Lull, 1985). Blumler (1984) argues for the examination of a particular social-structural group that uses media forms and content in its own unique ways, suggesting that researchers study media uses and gratifications that are socially relevant to members of a specific subgroup rather than investigating a homogeneous audience's general use of mass media. Studying situation-specific gratifications

sought from rock music, along with the degree of active involvement in listening and viewing, can lead to understanding its use among youth.

Previous descriptive work on adolescent use of rock music reveals a pattern of a decrease in television viewing as the principal media behavior and an increase in radio listening early in the teenage years (McLeod and Brown, 1976; Avery, 1979). Adolescents report that rock music is important in their lives, while television is unimportant (Roe, 1987). Males have been found to find the music more gratifying than females (Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson and Schiller, 1978). Females, however, indicate they use music while fantasizing about sex and romance (Frith, 1981).

## Gratifications Sought

Gratifications sought are defined conventionally for purposes of this study and applied to rock music: the perceived reasons and expectations for using the music based on past experiences with it (Blumler and Katz, 1974). Although the literature assumes a certain "rationality" to this process of satisfying gratifications, this study assumes this process need not be purposive nor logical.

A distinction exists in the literature between utility, or instrumental, and processural, or ritualized, gratifications, with "utility" seeking shown to lead to more activity (Atkin, 1972; Rubin, 1983). Entertainment media are generally reported to serve process needs within the immediate media use context; for example, escape, relaxation, passing the time. But useful information gathering can be gained from entertainment media as well. While adolescent entertainment gratifications from

rock are important, information gathering may occur from such utility gratifications as seeking something to talk about with friends or trying to bring out one's personality.

Generally, in mass media studies information seeking is conceptualized as a form of the more abstract construct, "information gathering" (Baldwin, 1969). This process, essential in socialization, involves one's forming cognitive representations from interpreting incoming data, and acquiring new information across situations, into a single cognitive schema, or representation. Information gathering is defined here as the orienting responses that reflect alertness, acute perception and attention--focusing on external stimuli, and asking questions, or expressing ideas freely and eliciting social reactions. This social type of information gathering may not be as deliberate or motivated, and simply incidental to a more specific behavioral goal. Adolescents, dealing with life cycle changes through the teenage years, may pay particular attention to content and social contexts where salient information is available about interpersonal relationships, political identification, career goals (Faber, Brown and McLeod, 1982). Thus, exposure to mass media would interact with expectations about and effort to use specific media, and these relationships are related to one's social structural placement and social milieu.

Active Involvement

Involvement has been variously defined in terms of cognition, affect and behavior (c.f., Chaffee and Roser, 1986), and is believed to occur before, during and after media use situations (Levy and Windahl, 1984).

Here, it will be defined as an interaction between individuals and rock's form and content, in which mental engagement is directly related to that form or content. Such active involvement is presumed to originate in previous interest and experience with similar media or environmental stimuli, as well as knowledge and expectations about such stimuli. Thus, people bring a set of learned processing strategies with them to rock use situations. Those may involve: (1) identification and categorization of actions and behaviors depicted by rock's imagery (verbal or pictorial); (2) referential reasoning about meanings of events or entities; (3) making causal attributions about actors' behaviors or relationships among people involved; (4) and integrating information from rock music to form impressions of behavior or other phenomena.

Researchers have found adolescents are actively interested in music listening, use it to facilitate social interaction, and talk about it a lot, (Lull, 1985; Roe, 1987). Similarly, high involvement has been documented from music video use, as well as listening (Abt, 1987).

## The Relationship Between Gratifications and Active Involvement

Rubin and Perse (1987) found a relationship between gratifications sought and activity for television soap opera viewers. They defined activity as talking about television content that is attended to and "parasocial interaction," or perceiving an interpersonal relationship with a television character. Social utility gratifications predicted interpersonal communication after viewing soaps, while seeking excitement, entertainment, social utility, escape, and relaxation, predicted

parasocial involvement--perceiving television soap opera characters as one's friend.

Levy and Windahl (1984) pose a model for viewing television news that can be extended to using any medium actively. They argue that gratification sought occurs prior to involving activities during exposure, because people who have certain expectations, and thus seek gratification from exposure, are led to engage in active involvement to achieve some satisfactions of that need. Their research showed a relationship between expectations and activity.

This study postulates that rock music users with personal or social utility gratifications will demonstrate acute and more enduring types of active involvement. Simply using rock music as background is expected to be less active. It is also believed that gratifications, or their interaction with exposure, will be more powerful predictors and explanators of active involvement than mere exposure. Reasons for seeking entertainment media, although they may not always be "rationally" motivated, nevertheless include cognitive, affective and conative components that are more directly related to active involvement than is amount, or frequency, of exposure.

The following hypotheses are forwarded: H1: The stronger the personal or social utility expectations, or gratifications sought, the greater the active involvement in rock music; H2: expectations, or gratifications sought, will predict activity stronger than social structural variables (age, sex and knowledge) and exposure.

Method

A sample of 175 public school students from three senior high schools in the Cleveland metropolitan area was surveyed, using self-report questionnaires administered en masse, resulting in a response rate of 99%.

Students reported their amount of consuming rock music on a stereo set, tape recorder, the radio, and television in number of hours per day. Gratifications sought from the use of rock music was measured using the standard items and other reasons for using rock music that emerged from previous research (Rouner, 1986). Respondents noted their level of agreement to the following reasons they use rock music, using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree: escape, something to talk about with friends, brings out my personality, and to enhance social, sexual, drug and alcohol use situations. In order to ascertain the level of knowledge about rock music, a series of recall and recognition measures was used. The students filled in blanks to complete a stanza of several popular recordings, and identified the respective performers and titles of the songs. Respondents were also requested to note their first and second most favorite musical artists and to write down a few lyrics from them.

Active involvement was ascertained using a number of items that measured activity--affective, behavioral and cognitive. Relative to affect, respondents were asked to note how important music is to their lives, on a five-point scale that ranged from extremely important to not at all important. To determine cognitive components of active involvement, the following items were obtained: Students' amount of effort in listening to music and viewing music videos, with a five-point scale,

ranging from extreme effort to none at all; using a five-point scale that ranged from always to never, reading lyrics that accompany purchased albums and tapes, and reading those lyrics for the purpose of memorizing them. Respondents were also asked to respond to a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, regarding the following activities while using rock music: paying attention to messages in rock music that reinforce their views of the real world, comparing a musician's lyrics across the artist's other recorded songs, comparing lyrics that appear in albums and tapes with those of other musicians' in general. Also, using a four-point set of choices that ranged from a lot to none, the respondents were queried about their level of effort in trying to memorize the lyrics of their favorite artists and their level of paying specific attention to music lyrics.

In addition, students self-reported age and sex. Their school was recorded by the survey's administrators.

Following factor analyses, interaction terms of the gratifications and an exposure index were formed, in order to test a completely hierarchical model. For this, the independent variable blocks were placed in order of presumed chronology--i.e., social structural variables of age and gender, followed by rock music knowledge, exposure, gratifications sought, and the interactions of exposure and gratifications.

## Results

This sample was quite close in age, with 15 percent 15, 15 percent 16, 38 percent 17, and 31 percent 18. There was a slightly higher percentage of females, with 54 percent.

A summative exposure index was created for the radio, tape, record and video exposure items, yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .84.

The knowledge items were recoded into the same direction and summed, achieving a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .83. Check coding on these items resulted in an intercoder reliability coefficient of .95.

After examining bivariate relationships between all the individual items in this study, a factor analysis (orthogonal, quartimax rotation) of the gratifications sought measures resulted in two distinct dimensions (see Table 1.) and accounted for 57.3 of the variation. The more traditional gratification reasons of "escape" and "seeking something to talk about with friends" loaded on the same dimension as "enhances social situations " and "brings out my personality." This factor, which we labeled Social/Personal Engagement Gratifications, accounted for 35.4 percent of the variation. The other dimension, named Social/Peripheral Catalyst Gratifications, was clearly dominated by reasons associated with rock as a backdrop, or facilitator for social behavior for which the music itself is peripheral, i.e., the music may affect the behavior but is unnecessary for the behavior's occurrence. The principal items of this factor were "rock music enhances the effects of alcohol/drugs" and "rock music enhances sexual encounters."

The factor analysis for rock music activity also resulted in two orthogonal dimensions (quartimax rotation), accounting for 54.9 of the variation (see Table 2). For this analysis, the item that measured amount of reinforcement respondents received from rock music was omitted

because of low correlations with the other activity items. Here, the two factors seemed to separate temporally, and according to level of acute perception, cognition and involvement vs. discrete processing behaviors (e.g., comparing pieces and types of information). The first dimension, labeled Involvement, accounting for 35 percent of the variation and was dominated by attending to rock's lyrics, expending effort in trying to memorize lyrics of a favorite artist, exerting effort in listening to and viewing music videos, reading the lyrics on album and tape jackets, and reading such jacket lyrics for the purpose of memorization. The second factor, Comparing, was comprised of two types of activity that necessitate over time attention and integration--thought processing, perhaps memory searching and sorting. The two prominent items on this dimension are comparing artists' lyrics across the artists' recordings and comparing artists and groups among one another.

Examining the bivariate relationships between the variables of interest in this study, including these indices (see Table 3.), we found that females are more knowledgeable about lyrics (-.20, $p < .05$). Knowledge was also strongly related to the Social/Personal Engagement gratifications index, with a correlation of .23, $p < .01$ and to Involvement (Pearson correlation=.30, $p < .001$) and Comparing (Pearson correlation= .18, $p < .05$). Exposure correlated with both gratification factors, but in opposite directions (Pearson r=.17, $p < .05$ for Social/Personal Engagement; Pearson r= -.14, $p < .05$ for Social/Peripheral Catalyst). That is, the greater amount of exposure, the more likely respondents are seeking out rock music for social and personal engaging reasons, but the less likely they are seeking rock music as a backdrop for sexual behavior or drug

intake. Finally, the Social/Personal Engagement gratifications dimension was correlated with both dimensions of activity (Involvement Pearson r=.46, $p<.001$; Comparing Pearson r=.53, $p<.001$). The Social/Peripheral Catalyst gratification factor was found to be related only to Comparing (Pearson r=.15, $p<.05$).

Although sex and age were not strongly associated with too many variables in this model, they were left in for the multivariate analysis, as originally intended. Turning to the multivariate results (see Table 4.), we regressed the two types of activity on the independent variables separately to determine the individual contribution of these factors on each activity phenomenon. Although both exposure-gratification interaction items were included in this analysis, the estimations were nonsignificant and did not account for increased variation in the dependent variables, thus the results penultimate to the interaction blocks are reported here.

As for the predictors of Involvement, we found no significant variation accounted for in the first block, sex and age. However, knowledge was found to influence Involvement, with a beta of .31 ($p<.01$), leaving a model at this stage that accounted for 10 percent of the variation of Involvement. Adding the exposure block showed little importance of that variable in explaining the model; however, the gratifications sought block, comprised of our two dimensions, significantly increased variation in Involvement, to 32 percent variance explained, $p<.01$. Only Social/Personal Engagement gratifications significantly predicted Involvement (beta=.48, $p<.001$). A similar pattern results for the dependent variable Comparing. Here, knowledge is not as significant an individual predictor,

and again the gratifications block strongly increased the variance accounted for by the block through exposure, R-square from .08 to .40, $p < .001$). Also, again, it was Social/Personal Engagement gratifications, not Social/Peripheral Catalyst, that influenced activity (beta=.55, $p < .001$).

## Discussion

This study offers evidence that rock music listening is varied, sometimes quite active. Support is presented for a strong relationship between gratifications sought, whether content utility or process specific, and two types of rock music activity, Involvement and Comparing. The critical distinction among gratifications predictors is how directly related to the specific listening/viewing context the gratifications sought are. If the motives are directly related to social content and context of rock consumption, activity follows. Further, these gratifications more strongly predict activity associated with the consumption of rock music than mere exposure to it across a number of media channels.

The process-utility dichotomy that has traditionally separated types of gratifications sought in measurement models did not apply in this study. Escape has been viewed traditionally by gratifications researchers as a process, or ritual, gratification, and it loaded with items that comprise a more specifically social, and content oriented, gratification. Rock music research to date has not unfolded a great amount of content-utility gratifications sought. Applying Baldwin's (1969) notion about varying types of information gathering, this gratification dimension begins to resemble an information gathering

factor. Information gathering that is more purposive, intentional, perhaps conscious, such as seeking something to talk about with friends clusters with escape and bringing out one's personality--seemingly non-purposive and unmotivated in regards to seeking out information, but these processes might results in such gain, nevertheless. In this regard, enhancing social situations more clearly configured with the Social/Personal Engagement dimension, but not with enhancing drugs and alcohol consumption, or sexual encounters. This separation could be explained by the highly personal aspect of these latter behaviors, which is clearly peripheral to rock music or whatever else is occurring. Although escape can be highly personal, identifying with characters and perhaps fantasizing about relationships similar to theirs can be directly related to socialization processes. Clearly, serious refinement of these gratifications sought items is imperative, as the 57.3 percent variation accounted for leaves considerable room for explanation. Reasons can be explored open-endedly, or through observation, as the more traditional gratifications items may be characteristic of conventional media use settings, such as television and newspaper consumption. The technology and portability of radios and tape players allow for rock music use to be more varied environmentally, in social and physical aspects.

The factor analysis for the dimensions of rock music activity accounted for a moderate amount of variance, almost 55 percent. In this case, however, the measurement model was not confirmatory in any respect and this is a most impressive finding. These mentalistic activities are quite difficult to measure with survey questions. Although the items are quite gross in their ability to capture such cognitive behaviors

as attending and thinking, we still have some evidence of a serious construct here. It is interesting to note the parsimonious correspondence here with the activity concept as defined by Levy and Windahl (1984), who argue differences within and outside of media use settings. The two dimensions could be interpreted in this context-specific manner. In this area, also, further refined measures are necessary. It is important to test a model that includes a few more processing-type activity measures, because the strength of the two types of comparing on the second dimension of this factor analysis is remarkable. It would seem important to try to obtain several more such indicators, for greater reliability and validity.

As for the causal model, we believe the relationships between the Social/Personal Engagement Gratifications and the two types of activity, Involvement and Comparing, demonstrate some useful observations about the meaning of rock music use. First, gratifications in this regard, even if on the face of it seem lacking in rational, motivated intent for consuming content that is beneficial, clearly predict activity. For some persons consuming rock music, the behavior may have a strong social purpose and can be quite active. It may also be relatively passive, particularly if one is using rock music principally as backdrop, or atmosphere. It is conceivable the lyrical messages of this genre are attended to and utilized by certain listeners and viewers, while at other times or among other users the content has little relevance at all. In addition, this activity is not merely a function of the enormous exposure many young people have to rock music, but is more importantly related to certain reasons they seek out and use it.

The reverse hypothesis is plausible in this study. However, it would seem less possible than a recursive interaction of activity, knowledge gain and gratifications sought and received, which would have to involve a simultaneous estimation procedure. An expanded model that includes the perceived gratifications received, as suggested by Levy and Windahl (1984), would offer a more complete test of this media use process. Also, explaining the two dimensions of activity here has an heuristic value in attempting to understand this complex process. However, to truly specify the relationship among all of the variables of this study, the types of activity would have to be included in the same model.

We believe this study's value lies in its differentiating across gratifications sought, rather than merely exposure variation, to gain some understanding into the activity of rock music use.

Table 1 Factor Loadings for Gratifications Sought

| | Factor 1<br>Social/<br>Personal<br>Engagement | Factor 2<br>Social/<br>Peripheral<br>Catalyst |
|---|---|---|
| Enhance social situations | .66 | .05 |
| Escape | .75 | -.11 |
| Bring out personality | .78 | .05 |
| Something to talk about | .65 | .06 |
| Enhance sexual situations | .24 | .78 |
| Enhance drugs/alcohol | -.12 | .84 |

| Factor | Eigenvalue | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2.13 | 35.4 | |
| 2 | 1.31 | 21.8 | 57.3 |

Table 2 Factor Loadings for Activity

| | Factor 1 Involvement | Factor 2 Comparing |
|---|---|---|
| Attention to music lyrics | .55 | .28 |
| Effort in memorizing lyrics | .67 | .03 |
| Music's importance in life | .68 | .10 |
| Effort for music videos | .66 | .09 |
| Read lyrics on lp, tape jackets | .62 | .05 |
| Read jacket lyrics to memorize | .76 | -.06 |
| Compare the lyrics of an artist | .10 | .90 |
| Compare lyrics across artists | .05 | .92 |

| Factor | Eigenvalue | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2.80 | 35.0 | |
| 2 | 1.59 | 19.9 | 54.9 |

Table 3 Bivariate Correlation Coefficients Between Major Variables in Study (entries are Pearson Product Moment coefficients)

| | Age | Sex | Know-ledge | Expose | Social/ Personal Engagement Gratifi-cation | Social/ Peri-pheral Gratifi-cation | Involve-ment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | .06 | | | | | | |
| Know-ledge | -.08 | -.20** | | | | | |
| Expose | -.02 | -.06 | .03 | | | | |
| Social/ Personal Engagement Gratifi-cation | -.05 | .03 | .23** | .17* | | | |
| Social/ Peripheral Gratifi-cation | .01 | .04 | .15 | -.14* | .12 | | |
| Involve-ment | .02 | -.03 | .30*** | .14* | .46*** | .07 | |
| Comparing | .05 | .17 | .18* | .11 | .53*** | .15* | .29** |

Table 4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Involvement and Comparing Regressed on Principal Independent Variables in Block Increments (entries are standardized beta coefficients)

| Predictors of Involvement: | Demographics | +Knowledge | + Exposure | +Grat Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | -.06 | -.02 | -.01 | -.03 |
| Age | .05 | .07 | .08 | .11 |
| Knowledge | | .31* | .31** | .20* |
| Exposure | | | .11 | .03 |
| Social/Personal Engagement | | | | .48*** |
| Social/Peripheral Catalyst | | | | .55*** |
| R-square | .01 | .10 | .11* | .32** |
| Inc R-square | -- | .09 | .01 | .21*** |
| Overall F | .33 | 3.39 | 2.86* | 8.41*** |

| Predictors of Comparing: | Demographics | +Knowledge | + Exposure | +Grat Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | .17 | .20 | .21 | .17 |
| Age | -.10 | -.08 | -.08 | -.04 |
| Knowledge | | .21* | .20* | .07 |
| Exposure | | | .13 | .08 |
| Social/Personal Engagement | | | | .55*** |
| Social/Peripheral Catalyst | | | | .03 |
| R-square | .04 | .08 | .10 | .40*** |
| Inc R-square | -- | .04 | .06 | .30*** |
| Overall F | .33 | 2.67 | 2.42 | 7.26*** |

(Sex is a dummy variable with 0=female, 1=male)

*=p .05
**=p .01
***=p .001

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